

A. H. Wiggin

LETTER,

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BY

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# LETTER

TO THE

REV. ROBERT HAWKER, D. D.

*Vicar of the Parish of Charles, Plymouth;*

OCCASIONED

BY HIS LATE EXPEDITION INTO CORNWALL.

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BY THE REV. R. POLWHELE,

VICAR OF MANACCAN.

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## LETTER, &c.

A

Manaccan, June 1, 1799.

REV. SIR,

THE fame of your preaching has reached me from the east and from the west: it has been echoed from the Heights of Maker; and re-echoed from the shores of the Lizard.

There is a lying spirit gone forth among the people; which has seduced them from the paths of truth, into dark and dangerous ways.

That political ~~retrospect~~ <sup>restlessness</sup>, which was, some time since, discoverable

among the lower orders of the community, had no sooner received a check from the hand of government, than it was converted into religious turbulence. When the stream was stopped in its original direction, it burst out into a new channel. And, in its present course, I consider it as more alarming than in its first.

Whether the rage both of political and religious opinion resemble or not, an epidemical disorder, breaking out periodically amongst the multitude, is a point of speculation which I shall not pretend to determine. But that the mania of methodism has seized the West of England, and is now spreading, at this instant, through its remotest parts, I have no hesitation in asserting.

Of this mania, Sir, you are represented as having taken an advantage, for the purpose of disseminating doctrines which the sobriety of reason would reject as unscriptural. Far be it from me to insinuate, that, in the principles you profess, you are insincere. However mistaken your religious persuasions may be, I am willing to hope, that you believe all you preach. But your intemperate zeal in (what is, doubtless, the most momentous of all causes,) the cause of Christianity, has led you into excesses, —into incorrectness of conduct, which have given offence to the more orderly amongst us.

To have a real regard for our church-establishment, yet attempt to excuse the demeanor which detaches from it the minds of the people, is utterly in-

compatible. The regular clergy, and the more sober part of their flock, are displeased with that presumptuous spirit which has apparently prompted you to visit their parishes, as a missionary of the gospel. And, let me ask you, whether you think your credentials are such, as will justify your conduct to your diocesan—are such as will satisfy any other, than the mad enthusiast, or the arrogant fanatic? Many of those who, drawn to you by the fascination of your eloquence, were on the point of deserting their proper churches; where, compared with yours, the preaching of their own pastors was spiritless, have already ceased to plead for an obtrusion which, in the eye of candour itself, will admit of no apology.

Under this impression, I would address

dress to you a few words of remonstrance; assured, that an enthusiasm like yours, if it immediately tend not to subvert our religious constitution, can neither promote private peace nor public tranquillity.

Had your *enthusiasm*, indeed, been such as a note attached to your Sermons on the Holy Ghost would induce us to expect, we should have little or no reason, perhaps, to complain of you. A piety so cordial, a spirit so finely devotional, as you there express, would not have taught you to "think more highly of yourself than you ought to think"—to deem yourself more righteous than others, and better qualified than your brethren in general, for instructing and admonishing the people. It would not have urged you to propagate the

gospel amidst the sands of the Lizard, or the Land's-end ; it would scarcely have carried your “ work and labour of love ” beyond the limits of your own populous parish. In the note \* in question, you protest against “ the wilful perversion of language, in the misapplication of the words *enthusiasm* and *fanaticism* when used towards religious persons as terms of reproach.” And you present us with a definition of enthusiasm, but leave fanaticism out of the question, as if they were words of the same import. That your ideas of enthusiasm are false, will shortly appear. “ He (you say) who in the contemplation of that love of God which passeth knowledge, feels an animation of the purest nature; to whose awakened mind the

\* Sermons on the Holy Ghost, Pp. 28, 29, 30, octavo edit.

recollection of his Redeemer's sufferings shall call tears from his eyes, and heave the sigh of sorrow in his heart ; this man is branded with the name of enthusiast, and classed with the most senseless of men." When, or where was a person of this description ever branded with the name of an enthusiast ? The expression of his sensibility, it is true, may exceed the bounds of moderation. None, however, but "the most senseless of men," would dare to ridicule his feelings. Every Christian, surely, would reverence that unaffected piety, which is unable to conceal its emotions in the contemplation of THE REDEEMER's sufferings ! Christianity is the religion of the heart. And if, "to be animated with the divine love, manifesting itself *in all the instances of duty*" —if this be enthusiasm, most sincerely  
do

do I join you in exclaiming. "would to God that I were the greatest enthusiast alive!" But you misconceive the meaning of the word enthusiasm, though you rightly refer us to the Greek *εὐθεστής*, translating it, with propriety, *numine afflatus*. He whom we term *εὐθεστής*, whether a sibyl or a methodist, is, in his own conceit, the inspired of heaven! Both in the Cumean cave and in the meeting-house,

“ ————— pectus anhelum,  
Et rabie fera corda tument; majorque videri,  
Nec mortale sonans; *afflata est numine quando*  
Jam propiore Dei.”

Enthusiasm, then, is not fervour in religion: it has little or no connection with the passions. It is a reverie of the fancy—a dream of imagination. Hence, with the methodists, the no-  
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tion of irresistible grace; the conceit of immediate and miraculous communications from the Deity; the claim to apostolical powers.

It was observed by a late pious and ingenious preacher, that, of all the possessions of the mind, a well-regulated imagination was productive of the truest enjoyments.\* In literary composition, your imagination, Sir, is equally chaste and brilliant. It scatters over your writings the most beautiful metaphors, but never with extravagance or profusion. I wish I could extend the compliment to the same faculty, as conversant in matters of religion. Here, I am afraid, it pursues visionary flights, and con-

\* The late Bishop Horne, preaching in St. Mary's Church, Oxford: these are nearly his words.

jures up phantoms, to the confusion of nature, and reason, and truth.

Your attempts to explain the operations of the Holy Ghost on the soul of man, in the volume already noticed, is marked with the absurdities of those bewildered men, who rant about sudden conversions, experiences, and raptures.

In a note at the 313th page, you tell us, that all men are as lifeless as Ezekiel's dry bones in the valley, till "the Lord put his Spirit into them, that they may live—" that preaching may wound the consciences of men, occasioning "a noise and shaking in the hearers;" may awaken greater attention to the outward forms of religion, more constant application to the means,

means, more careful endeavours after moral duties, like the sinews, the flesh, and the skin—but that, till the breath of the Lord breathe upon them, they can experience no life. According to this doctrine, our regeneration depends not, in the slightest degree, upon ourselves: it is the sole effect of the divine agency. We may be sober, and chaste, and just, and honest, charitable to the poor, benevolent to all. We may offer up our prayers and thanksgivings to God, both in public and private, join in the Holy Communion, and listen to the word of exhortation; and yet be on a footing, in respect to the spiritual life, with drunkards, and robbers, and sabbath-breakers. Unless the Lord hath predestined us for glory—unless his Spirit infuse life into our bodies, “ we are even as those that have been

long

long dead," mere masses of corruption.\* That he shall not only be

driven

\* In order to expose to you the absurdities and hypocrisy of the Methodists, I shall occasionally refer you to an excellent treatise of Bishop Lavington, entitled "The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compared;" where you may observe, I fear, several of your own doctrines too strongly illustrated. The following passage on the sudden conversion of the Saints, is worthy of your notice: "Faith, and being born of God, (says Wesley,) are an instantaneous work, at once and in a moment, as lightning."—"My being born of God, was an instantaneous act, enabling me, from that moment, to be more than conqueror over those corruptions, which before I was always a slave to. Very many persons changed in a moment; always suddenly, as far as I have known."—"By the words, being saved by Faith, we mean, that in the moment a man receives that Faith, he is saved from doubt, fear, and sorrow, from all his sins, vicious desires," &c. &c. *The Enthusiasm, &c.* Part I. Pp. 41, 42, 2d edit. In Dr. Clarke's observations on this

driven to God by an irresistible force, independent of our own inclinations or exertions, if we happen to be classed with

this subject, there is sound sense: "That disposition of mind, which qualifies men to embrace, effectually, the terms of salvation, is what the Scripture speaks of as an eminent *gift* or *grace* of God; not in the sense of those who think God works upon men mechanically, as upon mere machines, but in such a sense as reason is the gift of God, which makes us to be men, to be rational and intelligent creatures. And, though we receive it, wholly from God, the author of our being, yet it is a praiseworthy excellence in him that has it, because in the *use* and *exercise* of it, it depends entirely on the *free will* of the person himself, either to use or to abuse it, either to improve or to neglect and lose it." *Clarke's Sermons*, Vol. IV. Pp. 354, 355, 2d edit. "Sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, are the ends, for the promoting whereof Christ came into the world; whatever, therefore, tends not to promote these ends, is deceitful: whatever tends to frustrate them, is pernicious. By this rule may be weighed

with the Elect, but be sensible of the exact \* moment of this miraculous operation,

weighed the degree of dangerousness of every error in religion; every *inward opinion* concerning faith or grace, or the merits of Christ?"—*Clarke's Sermons.* Vol. II. p. 263.

\* " Oh! (says one of the wretched fanatics whom the Bishop of Exeter is exposing to just contempt,) Oh! I cannot be freed from doubting till I have more infallible assurances—till I hear Christ speaking to me; so that I may be *sensible in that very hour* that it is he that speaketh." Then for Mr. Wesley: " I felt faith in Christ; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine. The usual method of the spirit, is to give, at *one and the same time*, the forgiveness of sins, and an assurance of that forgiveness."—" In *that moment* (says another) I beheld the Lamb of God taking away my sins.—My sister received the atonement *on St. Peter's day*.—*At that hour*, one, who had long continued in sin, from a despair of finding mercy, received a full, clear sense of his pardoning love, and power to sin no more.

*Longlow*

One

operation, is a doctrine also of yours, in common with almost the whole

One person could neither eat, nor sleep, nor read, till Christ had assured him of salvation." By way of parallel to these presumptuous imaginations, we read, that "St. Francis bewailing his sins from the bitterness of his heart, was, by the Holy Ghost, fully certified of the plenary remission of all his sins. And once desiring a barber to shave him gratis, for the love of God, the barber refused till the Saint had given him full assurance of salvation."—See *The Enthusiasm, &c.* Part I. Pp. 43, 44. "How idle it is (says Dr. Ibbot) for men to trouble themselves, or others, about the exact time of their conversion!"—"We need not disquiet ourselves, or distrust our own state, because no strange thing has happened unto us, because we have not been terrified, nor felt any violent inward pangs and convulsions. For religion is easy and natural, pleasant and delightful, unless we have made it otherwise by contrary habits: and even we may be reconciled to it, without any of this unnatural dread or concern." See *Dr. Ibbot's excellent Sermons on the "new birth," and "new creature."*

tribe of religious enthusiasts. In a note at the 330th page of your Sermons, you intimate that the Elect Christian will look for “*a sensible demonstration of the spirit*,” like the apostles of old—the same *in kind*, though *in a less degree*—and, like them, will “*be suddenly filled with the Holy Ghost, and speak the word of God with boldness*.”

In your note on the omnipotence of the Holy Ghost, (at Pp. 255—259,) you must limit your observations. (you say) “to the particular illustrations of the divine agency in the history of the *faithful*”—“In the dispensations of God’s providence, how *refreshing* is it (you exclaim) to trace the omnipotence of the blessed spirit, manifested towards them in all the various means of *provision*, adapt-  
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ed to their multiform wants and necessities!"

The multiform wants of which you speak, are temporal, I conceive, as well as spiritual. If, in part, temporal, would you be understood to say, that the faithful, as contradistinguished from the rest of mankind, are visibly supported by Providence, like Elijah fed by ravens in the wilderness? If you do not, I confess you speak a language which to me is perfectly unintelligible. If you do, your assertion is too ridiculous for argument.

You deem it "all a mystery, how his Providence supports his faithful people, under the pressure of their troubles." That the true Christian should be able to bear affliction, with a greater degree of fortitude, than

others “ who live as without God in the world,” is to me no mystery. He trusts in God ; and, from this confidence, he derives comfort and support. But you would intimate, I suspect, that the faithful people, though, to common eyes, borne down by affliction, are lifted, by the hand of Providence, above all human troubles, in a manner inconceivable. This is the mystery.

It was owing to the assurance, I suppose, of such a providential interposition, that your great predecessors, Whitfield and Wesley, declared their contempt of all dangers and sufferings, and even prayed to God for persecution.\*

Yet

\* “ Mr. Whitfield rejoices exceedingly at the thought, that they should, one day, be sent to

Yet it appears, from their own journals, that these methodistical enthusiasts very frequently fell into “fears, desertions, dejections, despondencies.”

to prison.—*Refreshed with the news, that the landlord would not let us stay under his roof; and at the sweets of opposition; receiving a blow from a cudgel-player with the utmost love.*”—He is quite in haste for persecution, calling upon the devil to bring it on. “The hour of persecution is not yet come. I really wonder it comes no faster. Satan, why sleepest thou?”—*The Enthusiasm, Part I. Pp. 28, 29.*  
 “Mr. Wesley ostentatiously boasts of bearing heat and cold on the naked head, rain and wind, frost and snow, as some of their smallest inconveniencies.”—“Our bed being wet, I laid me down on the floor, and slept soundly till the morning. And, I believe, I shall not find it needful to go to bed any more.”—“But his old friend, St. Francis, (says the Bishop,) outstrips him. St. Francis happening once to use a pillow, on account of illness, the devil got into his pillow, and made him uneasy all night. But upon

dencies.” The simple force of imagination, however, hath carried Heathens, and Christians too, almost “be-

upon his ordering the pillow, with the devil in it, to be carried away, he presently recovered.”

*Enthus.* Part I. Pp. 32, 33. “ Mr. Wesley travelling on foot in the night, in a heavy rain, weary, and not knowing his way, has a groupe of miracles to relieve him in each particular ! O that thou wouldest stay the bottles of heaven ! or, at least, give me light, or an honest guide, or some help in the manner thou knowest ! Presently, the rain ceased ; the moon broke out ; and a friendly man overtook me, who set me on his own horse, and walked by my side, till we came to Mr. Gambold’s door.”—“ St. Aridius, and his society, were often perfectly dry in the midst of prodigious showers. And St. Berno had always the same privilege ; for which reason he is called Dry-coat.”—“ You see the peculiar privileges of such concealed favourites of heaven. The common course of Providence must be altered for their sake ; and all nature made subservient to their whimsical dispensation.”—*Enthus.* Part II. Pp. 49, 50.

yond

yond the visible diurnal sphere”—hath so far abstracted the mind from the tortured body, as to suspend the nervous sensibility. Do you think, when the philosopher bit out his tongue, and spat it, in the face of the tyrant, that “his weakness was strengthened by the Holy Spirit?”

Thus much for the dispensations of God’s *providence*. “And what (you add) must those of his *grace* be, but a continual miracle from the beginning to the end! It is not exerted in supporting what is already strong; not in helping what possesses some power; not in cleansing what is in part holy; but in taking such as are of the mass of helpless infirm and polluted creatures of the dust, and purifying them for his glory.”—Here again you express yourself with much ambiguity.

But,

But, according to the most obvious construction of your meaning, I may deduce, from this sentence, that dangerous *axiom* : “ the greater the sinner, the greater the saint.” If the Holy Spirit exert itself only in purifying those who are polluted by sin, what have we to do, but to gather about us “ the filthiness of the flesh,” as fast as we can, in order to render ourselves fit objects of grace? “ Let us sin, that grace may abound.” If this be not the sense of the passage, I must leave it to be interpreted by those who dream dreams and see visions. The conclusion of your note can relate only to the favoured few ; who, in the saint’s progress, are arrived at such a proficiency, as to be admitted into the presence of God, and suffered, for an exhibition of their powers, to wrestle with the devil. It is

is to this purpose that you express yourself. "Were the Lord's people to distinguish themselves as his people, they might be better prepared for such needful transitions in life; as when from the mountain of retreat and prayer, *where the manifestation of the Divine presence is*, sometimes, graciously afforded them, they are led, like their master, into the wilderness, to sustain the conflicts of the tempter." Here, I think, *your* worthy masters, Whitfield and Wesley, and Co. scarcely surpass you in the flights of fancy. Shudder, Sir, at their blasphemies, as reported by Bishop Lavington. "The presence of the Lord was with me, wonderfully."—"God was, indeed, there; riding in the midst of the congregation, and breathing life and courage into his lambs."—"Jesus has been with me to-day."—

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“ In the morning I talked with God in the garden, as a man talketh with his friend.”—“ The Lord gave me the text I preached upon, and directed me to a method, as I was going up the pulpit-stairs.”—“ Our dear master being invited, came and sat at the head of the table, and bid me give his people to eat.”—“ A Methodist (says Mr. Wesley) went to receive the sacrament, but with a heart as hard as a stone ; when God was pleased to let him see a crucified Saviour : I saw the fountain opened in his side !”—“ Oh ! what sweet communion (says Mr. Whitfield) had I, daily, vouchsafed from God ! I cannot tell how tenderly I am carried by our dear Saviour, from day to day. I lean on Jesus’s bosom from morning to night ; yea, all the day long. I sweetly leaned on Jesus’s bosom, and sucked out of the breast of

of his consolation."—"Every day I have had sweet communion with my dear Lord Jesus, who filled me with his fulness.\*"

\* "This bids fair for coming up in due time to his rival saints. St. Felix, a Franciscan, burned with such an excessive love towards the Virgin Mary, that, not able to bear it, he requested her to come to him. She did so: and it cannot be express what a power of heavenly consolations he felt."—"The Jesuit Barman, for a refuge in all his complaints, takes refuge in the breast and bosom of the Virgin Mary. For she was sometimes pleased to come and give her votaries suck."—"Once Christ came, in company with St. Dominic, to visit Teresa; but soon withdrew, and bade her recreate herself with his friend Dominic. And she had certain enjoyments of great gusts and consolations; and spoke such high, sweet, and amorous things!!! Such is spiritual love (says the Bishop) among Popish fanatics, enough to give one a surfeit of their methodistical imitators." *Enthus. Part I. Pp. 54, 55, 56, 57.*

“ The love of God (says Wesley,) was shed abroad in my heart ; and a flame kindled there with pains so violent, and yet so very ravishing, that my body was almost torn asunder.—I lov'd—The spirit cried strong in my heart—I sweated—I trembled—I fainted—I sung—Oh ! I thought my head was a fountain of water—I was dissolved in love—My beloved is mine and I am his—He has all charms—He has raised my heart—He is now in the garden, feeding among the lilies—Oh ! I am sick of love.\*”—“ The Lord revealed himself

\* “ We may observe the symptoms of the like flame in St. Catharine of Sienna, St. Teresa, St. Gertrude. St. Catharine's burning love for Christ, her most sweet spouse, was so intense, excessive, and divine, that she was almost always sick, languishing saint. Once this fire was so intense, that it took away her life for four

self (according to Mr. Wesley's report) to a girl of about seven years old, in an amazing manner; and, for some hours, she was so wrapt up in his spirit, that we knew not where she was! Many such instances of the outpouring of the spirit we have among us!"

Such, Sir, is the animal magnetism of the Methodists, in the crisis of

four hours; in which time she had a vision of heaven, hell, and purgatory: St. Teresa died, not so much of any distemper, as the intolerable burning of divine love."—" St. Gertrude and Christ were mutually smitten with the arrows of love; and she died of this amorous fire."—" I am much mistaken (subjoins the Bishop) if some of our most enthusiastic pretenders to the love of God, have not entertained the same violence of passion (not quite so spiritual) for some of their neighbours." *Enthus.* Part II. Pp. 58, 59.

which, (Mr. Wesley soberly tells us,) “ are conveyed remission of sins, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost !\*”

As to your transitions from the divine presence to conflicts with satan, the good Bishop of Exeter can furnish you with parallels enough from the legends of the saints. “ I shall now give some account, (says his Lordship,) or rather they themselves, of the conflicts and combats of the Methodists with satan. First, Mr. Whitfield: ‘ God only knows how many nights I

\* Pp. 77, 79. Here, I think, if we charge Wesley with hypocrisy, Charity herself will scarcely make an effort in the vindication of his character. If innocent, a fool or a madman he must have been. The former he was not: and, amidst the cool moments of recollection, in which he was reviewing his life, composing his journals, or correcting his writings for the public eye, he was not mad.

have

have been groaning, and bidding satan depart from me. I had, then, power over my secret and darling sin. But being some time after overtaken in liquor, satan gained his usual advantage over me: an experimental proof to my poor soul how that wicked one makes use of men as machines, working them up to just what he pleases. Let me observe, Sir, (by the way,) that the Methodists around us are, this moment, copying, to a hair, their arch-apostle; thus throwing off their sins upon satan, when they have only themselves to blame. Cherishing with avidity their own wicked desires, and committing crimes in all the plenitude of free-will; they have, yet, the impudence to tell us that they are mere machines, acted upon by the devil. According to the Methodists, therefore, sin is an involuntary act. "Op-

prest, in this manner, by the wicked one, Mr. Whitfield applied for relief to his friend Mr. Charles Wesley, who advised him to keep upon his watch, and referred him to a chapter in Kempis." Notwithstanding Thomas-a-Kempis, we find satan afterwards "confining Whitfield to his closet, because he could not do any thing with a single intention," i. e. was a hypocrite. Why satan, however, shall endeavour to cure a man of his hypocrisy, seems rather problematical. But the devil is an odd character with Mr. Whitfield; tempting him to lay aside his diary, in which, out of pride, he had set down his charities."

The devil prompting him to disobedience, Mr. Whitfield too hastily attributes the suggestion to the Holy Spirit ! For, being urged with the command

command in Scripture, to be subject to the higher powers, he answered, “ yes, but he had a new revelation.” Yet he retracts his error. Who knows, Sir, but his followers may discover, in some evil hour, a jacobinical bias, and attempt, by the same plea, to justify their disaffection; though, more reserved, perhaps, than their apostle, they may not, so readily, acknowledge their mistake, in ascribing that to the Holy Ghost which was prompted by the devil? We see Mr. Whitfield still struggling with the enemy. For, when “ he went to attack the devil in his strongest holds, satan endeavoured to interrupt his preaching, by sending a panic upon his audience.” In the mean time, Mr. Wesley escapes not the attacks of this infernal spirit! Both he and his congregation<sup>II</sup> “ are affected by satan,

satan, with such a spirit of laughter as they could in no wise resist, though it was pain and grief unto them—many of them continued laughing for two days, a spectacle to all.” Once, whilst Mr. Wesley was preaching, the devil knew his kingdom shook ; and, therefore, stirred up his servants to ring bells, and make a noise. The prince of the air made another attempt in defence of his tottering kingdom : great numbers of men began to speak big swelling words : the many-headed beast began to roar again : the devil’s children fought valorously for their master. One large stone (many of which they threw) went just over my shoulder. But no one was hurt in any degree. For thy kingdom ruleth over all.\*”

\* See *Enthus.* Part II. Pp. 51—74.

The acme of the Methodists is a state of sinless perfection.\* That you, Sir, conceive yourself to be arrived at this state, I will not absolutely assert. But, as you intimate, in your note on *sincerity*, that all who sin must be inevitably damned; and as the Lord's people have received positive assurances of salvation; it should appear, that the Lord's people cannot sin. If they can, these assurances are fallacious.

From all these particulars, I think, you are clearly enough proved to be an *enthusiast*, according to the true definition of the word: but it does not follow that you are a *fanatic*. Whilst the enthusiast imagines him-

\* The Wesleyans maintain the possibility of a sinless perfection. *Enthus.* Part I. P. 47.

self possest of general *knowledge*, miraculously communicated ; the *fanatic* thinks, or affects to think, that he has received particular *directions* from God, with regard to his spiritual conduct.

As preaching, indeed, is one of the gifts of the spirit to which you lay claim, together with the first apostles, (though, perhaps, *in a less degree*,) you may, possibly, have been favoured with an especial direction from heaven, to come into Cornwall, and preach the gospel.\* Among the gifts of the spirit,

\* Under the head of *Special Directions*.—"I am going to the house of a wealthy gentleman, (says Mr. Whitfield,) whom God has *commanded* to receive me."—"Mr. Wesley came to Mr. Delamotte's; where he expected a cool reception. But God had prepared the way before him."—"In what manner (observes the Bishop) the

spirit, however, are enumerated others, besides that of preaching—those of working miracles, for instance, and of prophecy. To prove the divinity of their mission, as preachers of the gospel, the entertainers are convinced of this divine command, I cannot say. But I perceive it is convenient for the itinerants to give it out, that it is God's pleasure and command. Otherwise, they would not order what they want at a public house, and then tell the landlord, *that he will be damned if he takes any thing of them.*"—“One may be allowed to ask, what sort of voice that was which *directed* the Methodist preacher at Salisbury to debauch one, at least, of his congregation, to run away with her, and leave his own wife? And, whether Mr. Wesley might not as well have been warned as offended by his friends the Moravians, for talking much against mixing nature with grace, against imagination, and concerning the animal spirits mimicking the power of the Holy Ghost?”

*Enthus.* Part I. Pp. 69—71.

gospel

gospel in all lands, the apostles worked miracles. If you pretend to the same mission, work a miracle, and we will no longer entertain a doubt of your pretensions: unless you do this, we will not believe you.

But, perhaps, yourself, or friend, will alledge, be my sentiments of your mission what they may, that I am incapable of forming a just opinion of your doctrines, from a few scattered, solitary notes.

Let us have recourse, then, to a little treatise of yours; which contains, according to your own accounts of it, "the sum and substance of religion."

In

In this treatise,\* you observe, that “the substance of the gospel, as to its saving influence, might be brought within the compass of three particulars ; *the first* of which is, to know ourselves in our lost and ruined state before God. *The second*, to know the Lord Jesus Christ, under all his divine offices, as the restorer of our fallen nature. *And the third*, to know we have a dear interest in him.”

Under *the first* head, you tell us, that “unless the grace of God hath passed upon us, we are all alike dead in trespasses and sins ;” and that “we cannot think a good thought, speak a

\* Entitled, “The Great and Leading Points of the Gospel, explained in Three Dialogues between a Minister and one of his Parishioners.”

good word, or do a good action.\*” (Pp. 6, 7.) According to this doctrine, the best moral men, and the most hardened villain, are equally the objects of their Creator’s wrath, and must both be damned to all eternity, unless God choose to draw them to himself. In your opinion, indeed, “the hardened villain” has the best chance of being saved; since you declare, (at p. 28,) that, “though you were the chief of sinners, your encouragement is not lessened but increased.” In the number of lost sinners, you include thousands, and tens of thousands, (p. 8,) who, every

\* A doctrine which you falsely deduce from 2 Corinth. iii. 5. whilst, in order to render your own meaning more forcible, you quote the text falsely. “*All* our sufficiency is of God.” The original is, *η επαρχοντις ημων εκ του Θεου.* “Our sufficiency is of God.”

Lord’s

Lord's day, attend the service of the church.

Under *the second* head, your parishioner makes his appearance distracted and miserable. (p. 10,) "He has discovered, (he says,) that his fancied righteousness before God is full of unworthiness; and that even, in his most holy things, he is unholy." He does not detect, (as the best of men might do,) any improprieties or errors in his behaviour; see his infirmities in a stronger light; regret, for instance, the obtrusion of unchaste and irreligious thoughts, or specify any omissions of duty to his wife, his children, or his fellow creatures; but, on the principle of original depravity, he laments, in a general obscure manner, the bias of his nature to sin, and

cries out, that “in his flesh there dwelleth no good thing.” (P. 13.)

Amidst his anxieties to repent, and to be received amongst the faithful, you tell him, for his comfort, that repentance is *the sole gift* of God ; and that “a man might as soon change the colour of his hair, or alter the complexion of his countenance, as the complexion of his mind ; that the strongest resolutions formed in man’s own strength must fail ; and that, even if it were possible to keep them, the good conduct of the present can make no compensation towards God for the evil conduct of the past.” (P. 14.) You inform your parishioner, however, that “as the sins of his people are transferred to the person of Jesus, so his righteousness

ness is imputed to them also ;" and that, in consequence of this imputation, " they are considered as righteous before God." (P. 17.) Surely this is one of the most absurd and dangerous doctrines that ever was devised by man. If the righteousness of Christ be imputed to the faithful, so as to become (as you teach us) their righteousness, it follows, that the faithful are equally righteous ; and, indeed, that the faithful are, in the eye of God, as righteous as Christ himself!!! How impious ; how blasphemous ! Vain are our hopes of salvation, unless we endeavour to attain some righteousness of our own ! The scriptural doctrine of the redemption is, simply, as follows : Man had broken the first covenant between his Creator and himself ; and this transgression demanded punishment from the di-

vine justice. It was then a mediator appeared between God and man: and this mediator was Christ Jesus; who, having made, by his sufferings and death, a full atonement and satisfaction for that transgression, obtained a new covenant for man. The condition of this covenant is, Repentance from every evil work; a lively faith; and obedience to the will of God, to the best of our poor abilities; an obedience, though not perfect, yet sincere. If we perform this condition, we shall obtain, through the merits of Christ, eternal happiness. If we fail in the performance of it, we have nothing to expect but everlasting misery.

But to return to the dialogue, your parishioner, Sir, seems amazed at the mysteriousness, the incomprehensibility,

lity, of your doctrines. This is not to be wondered at. Nor are we surprised that, at the close of the second interview, he goes home with only “a faint glimmering view” of what you have been describing.

Under *the third* head, you congratulate your parishioner “on his feeling himself to be a poor sinner; on being sensible of the burthen of his sins.” (P. 23.)

With respect to our Saviour, your parishioner observes, that he is perfectly satisfied of the all-sufficiency of Jesus, to purify the sinner from the leprosy of sin. “But, whether Jesus will condescend to cleanse *me*; whether *I* am the object of his grace and mercy; this is the grand point I want to

to know," says your trembling parishioner. (P. 24.)

This, you tell him, is really the grand point, since "religion is a *personal* thing; and another man's Christ can be nothing to your parishioner, unless he be your parishioner's Christ also."

Of this personal interest in Christ, (you say,) he will probably receive, at *some time* or other, an *assurance* from heaven. When, however, the time of this assurance shall come, you cannot inform him, though you observe, that he goes sorrowing all the day in a sense of transgression, and frequently crying out under the heavy load of sin, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this

this death!" (p. 30.) You, at last, dismiss him with the admonition—“ Not to be impatient in the expectation of this assurance.” And you tell him, in consolation, that “ many a gracious soul may walk without assurance through life; and the dying hour will be the sealing hour.”

So your poor parishioner leaves you, weighed down by the burthen of his sins, and doubtful when the moment of grace shall arrive to relieve him from that burthen. Is it possible, that any man, with such a horror upon his spirit, can perform the common duties of life with any degree of satisfaction to himself, or his connexions? It seems, then, that all mankind come under two grand divisions:

1. Those

1. Those who, left to themselves, are insensible of their sins.

2. And those who, awakened to a sense of their sins, are either expecting, or have actually received, an assurance of salvation.

For the first class, I will not assert, that you have adopted the Calvinistic doctrine of their reprobation from all eternity. Yet, according to your notion of "Redemption-work," (as you term it,) you must consider the whole human species as in the broad way to destruction, except those very few, who not only feel their sins, like your parishioner, but are enabled by the Holy Spirit to transfer their sins to Christ, and apply his righteousness to themselves. To all who are without the

the pale of Christianity, this is utterly impracticable.\*

In nearly the same predicament are the whole tribe of professional Christians.

One, out of many millions, may be sensible of his sins, and favoured with

\* If St. Paul's authority be preferable to Dr. Hawker's, (a questionable point, perhaps, as they were both equally gifted by the Holy Ghost, and almost have been equally righteous, from the imputation of Christ's righteousness,) the Heathens not having the law, are a law unto themselves: and, if they act in conformity to that law, they will assuredly be saved through Christ, who died for the sins of the whole world. If Dr. H. allow the truth of this position, and yet exclude moral Christians from salvation, it is a truly unfortunate thing, that they were born in a Christian country, or admitted within the pale of the church.

a call

a call from the spirit; but the rest  
are consigned over to perdition.\*

How

such thoughts bring on us affliction and

\* That infants, who die before baptism, will  
be damned, is a tenet of the rigid Calvinist;  
and, it is perfectly consistent with the doctrine  
of original sin. Yet how full of barbarity and  
blasphemy, to damn to the flames of hell those  
little children of whom our Saviour said, that  
“their’s is the kingdom of heaven!” Surely, it  
was its *natural*, not its acquired, disposition,  
which our Saviour bade us imitate, when he  
enjoined us “to receive the kingdom of hea-  
ven as a little child.” Nevertheless, if its spirit  
escape from it without the form of baptism, it  
is condemned, with all its simplicity and inno-  
cence, to everlasting torments! Rather, indeed,  
than have specified a doctrine, more wild and  
extravagant than that of the Limbus Infantum  
of Virgil, we should have observed, with  
Plato, of its advocates: *Καὶ οὐργὸν χρονὸν*  
*Βιουντεν περα αλλα ελεγεν ουκ αξια μημεν.* De  
Rep. l. 10. p. 615. Ser. Ed. From John ix.  
2, 3, where our Saviour’s disciples ask him,  
“who did sin, this man, or *his parents*, that he

was

How dreadfully this doctrine must operate in the conduct of life, I need not observe to you.

I have heard of instances of elect parents casting off their children, and elect children separating themselves from their parents, as from lost souls. I have known husbands, among the Lord's people, who have abandoned their wives to perdition,\* though virtuous

was born blind?" &c. We may draw an inference, I think, "that the Calvinistic doctrine of original sin, is false." For, if it were true, our Saviour would have immediately resolved the doubts of his disciples, by recurring to it. A Calvinist would have answered, that the punishment of blindness inflicted on the child from its birth, was owing to its own sins, transmitted to him, through his parents, from Adam.

\* Because their wives resembled too much the innocence and simplicity of little children to

F be

tuous and religious women, and refused to admit them even to family prayer, because they professed themselves insensible to the operations of the Spirit !

You, Sir, I perceive, are acquainted with numerous instances of this sort. Alas ! is this the word of the merciful God, who is “ not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance ? ”

In the mean time, those of the other class, who are either expecting, or have received, an assurance of salvation, are not, at all, better qualified for acceptance with heaven, on the score of morality ; nay, it should seem,

be sensible of pollution from sin, and, consequently, were never drawn (by the Spirit) unto Christ, to be cleansed from such a leprosy.

that

that they are not so well qualified in this point as their fellow mortals in general.

With you, it seems, the tests of Christian rectitude are "a horrible dread, overwhelming the spirits;" the agonizing cry for mercy; and the tremblings of suspense, or "hope deferred," perhaps, through life; and the transports of experiences, and visions, and conferences with God!

With us, however, (the reprobate and the damned,) the tests are chastity, sobriety and honesty, humility and "love unfeigned." By these, "shall all men know, that we are Christ's disciples." With us, Christianity is a religion of action, not of speculation. Instead of elevating us above the duties of our station, it en-

forces the strictest attention to our several callings. It teaches us, for instance, that the poor labourer in the fields, who serves his master with fidelity, carries home the produce of his industry, for his wife and family, and, cheerfully sharing with them the comforts of his cottage, looks up to Providence for a blessing upon his honest exertions, and trusts, for the pardon of his "human errors," in the mercies of his Saviour; has a fairer prospect of an inheritance with the saints in light, than he that neglects his labours and deserts his dwelling, led astray by some itinerant preacher, and "hungering and thirsting after righteousness," whilst his offspring are crying to their mother for bread, naked, cold, and destitute ! \*

\* The distresses introduced into families by Methodism stand so prominent in almost every town

If the latter, at length, return to his wretched habitation, he will return, perhaps, groaning under the weight of his sins, and trembling from the

town in the kingdom, that I need not adduce instances to evince the justness of the above picture. Were it necessary, I could mention a cobbler, at no great distance from this place, who used to live contented and happy with his wife and little family, till the woman was seduced, by a young Methodist preacher, both from "his bed and board." The man, possessing no very quiet spirit, often expostulates with his wife (on her return to him, perhaps, at two or three o'clock in the morning,) on her disorderly behaviour, and sometimes has recourse to the strap for a little wholesome correction. But her attachment, I believe, to her daily and her nightly instructor, is too strong to be overcome by remonstrances, menaces, or blows. Her children, before neat and clean, and blooming with health, are now "yellow with misery." Nor can her husband, full of resentment and jealousy, pursue, with any comfort,

the apprehension of the wrath to come, and fitted only to add despair to misery. But, for the other cottager, he sanctifies, with gratitude, his humble meal, and the little blaze that illuminates his walls, in the circle of his helpmate and his innocent children. He enjoys the present hour; and (pardon me, Sir, the expression,) the *assurance* of blessedness, hereafter!

his solitary labours.—I am acquainted with a similar instance of aberration in another neighbourhood, where the husband has had the most substantial proof in the world of his wife's devotion to her spiritual guide. But Methodism does not stop here. It plunges its votaries into every vice. In its sober moments it is polluted with adultery!—In its frenzy it is imbrued with murder! Very lately, in this part of Cornwall, a poor man having heard a Methodist preacher on the text, “*I will wash my hands in innocence*,” went home, and seized his infant child, then asleep in its cradle, and murdered it, and “*washed his hands in the innocent's blood!*”

Yes!

Yes ! he hath an assurance, the most infallible in the world—an assurance, by which we may live and die in peace with ourselves, our fellow-creatures, and our God—the assurances which arise from the testimony of a good conscience. “ For, (says the apostle, referring us to the law of nature, which is prior to the law of revelation,) beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we *confidence* towards God.\* ”

Of all the divines with whose wri-

\* According to Dr. Clarke, and other rational divines, the only way to understand the Scriptures rightly, is to explain one text by another, and so as that none shall contradict the “ great law of nature, which is, likewise the law of God.” Does not our Saviour himself refer the Pharisees to the religion of nature, when he asks them, “ Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right ? ”

tings

tings I am acquainted, I think Archbishop Secker gives us the sense of the Holy Scriptures in the clearest and most satisfactory manner. In many places has the Archbishop contrasted faith with works: in many places has he illustrated, by characters, the difference between speculation and practical religion; and drawn the portrait of the enthusiast and the rational Christian.

How little does your Christian resemble Secker's! Your Christian, for instance, as soon as he feels the awakening word, goes groaning all the day long, under the sense of transgression; under the mysterious apprehension of impending judgement, he is all anxiety and terror. He repairs to his parish-priest, and is presented with a view of Jesus dying for the

the sins of man ; and, when a gleam of comfort is breaking in upon his mind, he is told, that unless Christ died for *his* sins, in particular, it is to no purpose, with respect to himself, that Christ died at all.

Whether Christ is become his own Christ, or not, can only be learnt by a sudden miraculous assurance. But, whether he shall receive the assurance, or when, is uncertain. He, therefore, returns home in despondency ; hoping and fearing, doubting and disbelieving, never at ease, unfitted for the commerce of life, and dreading the approach of death. If, however, an assurance come, his transports are such, so great his exaltation above all earthly connections or concerns, that he is no longer a being of this world.

He

He looks down, with supercilious contempt, even on his nearest relations ; and, damning them to eternal perdition, exults in the blessedness of the saints.

Such, Sir, is your Christian. Let us now view the Christian of the good Archbishop.

“ *He* hath a peace within his breast, which passeth all the understanding of those who have not experienced it. He feels no tormenting remorse ; no disquieting dread of God or man. He is never agitated by malice or envy ; seldom, and but gently moved by anger. Pity, indeed, he often experiences ; but, gratifying it, comforts both himself and others. His behaviour is friendly, and, therefore, agreeable.

able. His discourse lively, if nature hath qualified him for it; but, at least, inoffensive and conciliating. His heart is open, in a proper degree, to all the innocent amusements of life, and he longs for none of the prohibited ones. Virtuous discretion preserves his health and spirits, as much as worldly uncertainties permit, makes his circumstances easy, his family and dependents orderly and happy. His judicious beneficence is very useful; his blameless example yet more. Thus, he reaps no little joy from the esteem of others, but unspeakably more from the testimony of his own conscience. He is sensible, indeed, of many failings; but all consistent with that sincerity which God, he knows, will recompense. Never will society grow gloomy, but inexpressibly more cheerful for being  
com-

composed of persons of this description.\*”

Thus, Sir, I have endeavoured to exhibit what I conceive to be the distinguishing traits of Christianity. I have presented you with an outline of the gospel, as “it is in Christ Jesus.”

And, from a thorough conviction that the preaching of any “other gospel” must be attended with the most pernicious consequences to individual man, and to society, I have thus dared, in the name of my clerical brethren, to expostulate with you. I am assured, that Methodism has, from its first rise to its present state of insolent boasting, been alarmingly injurious to the community.

\* See the whole of Secker’s admirable Sermon on Phil. ii. 21.

The

The character of the original Methodists, as drawn by Lord Lyttelton, you would do well, perhaps, to contemplate. “ Variety, or self-conceit, (says his Lordship,) for the most part, prevails in the character of an enthusiast. It leads men of a warm temper, and a religious turn, to think themselves worthy of the special regard, and extraordinary favours, of God: and the breath of that inspiration to which they pretend is often no more than the wind of this vanity, which puffs them up to such extravagant imaginations. This strongly appears in some of the Methodists. All their divine communications, illuminations, and ecstacies, evidently spring from much self-conceit, working together with the vapors of melancholy on a warm imagination.\* ”

\* Lyttelton on the Conversion of St. Paul.

If you attribute this description of the Methodist to the prejudice of worldly-mindedness; hear, Sir, their own account of themselves: "In how many things (says Whitfield) have I judged and acted wrong: I have been too rash and hasty in giving characters of places and persons. I have often used a style too apostolical, and have been often too bitter in my zeal. Wildfire has been mixed with it; and I frequently wrote and spoke in my own spirit, when I thought I was writing and speaking by the assistance of the spirit of God.\* When I said I was constrained to go in a coach to avoid the *hosannas* of the multitude, the word was wrong and unguarded." — "I have dropped expressions too

\* Whitfield's Remarks on the Enthusiasm, &c. Pp. 35, 36.

strong

strong concerning absolute reprobation.\*”

These confessions, I think, sufficiently prove the correctness of Lord Lyttelton's description.

Mr.

\* Whitfield's Remarks on the Enthusiasm, &c. p. 38.

† On which the Bishop justly observes, “When you make excuses for your groundless pretences to inspiration, a divine commission, &c. on account of your most early days, and in the height of your first popularity, when your head was giddy ; you hereby confess, that you was most popular, when you was the greatest lyar ; best loved and admired, when you seduced the multitude by cheat and imposture. And what a fine compliment is this to your follower's understanding, and your own integrity ? What fools have you made of them, and what a knave of yourself ?”—“ When you received the *hosannas* of the multitude ; I really thought it an error of the press for *huzzas*.—

G 2

How

Mr. Wesley was a more guarded character. He was full of artifice. He was cautious in his pretences ; and cautious in his retractations. There are times, however, in which, buoy'd up by his “vanity,” he “high over-leaps all bounds.\*” “I think, verily, (says Wesley,) if † the gospel

How could you abstract from profaneness an application to yourself of the divine honour, paid to the adorable Redeemer of mankind ?”—  
*Enthus.* Pref. to Part II. Pp. xix. xx.

\* “ ——— The arch-felon in contempt  
At one short bound, high over-leap'd all  
bound.”  
“ So clomb this first grand thief into God's  
fold ;  
So, since into his church lewd hirelings  
climb.”

MILTON's Par. Lost.

† Both Wesley and Whitfield had often their doubts of the truth of the gospel.

be

be true, I am safe ; for, I give up all my goods to feed the poor—give my body to be burned, drowned, or whatever God shall appoint. I shew my faith by my works, by staking my all upon it—therefore are my ways not like other men's ways. Are they read in philosophy ? So was I. In ancient or modern tongues ? So was I also. I left London—went to Bristol—surprized, when I went into the room, just after my brother had finished the sermon, some wept aloud, some clasped their hands, some shouted, the rest sang praise. Art thou come, says another, thou blessed of the Lord ?\* ”

In the moment of affected humility, Mr. Wesley informs us, that “ he is

\* Part II. Pp. 21, 22.

convinced, by the most infallible proof—*inward feelings*—of unbelief, of pride, of levity, and of luxuriancy of spirit, by speaking words not tending to edify, but most by his manner of speaking of his enemies."

That Wesley was more subtle than his brother Whitfield is evident from his whole conduct; and from no part of it more so than his affectation of an attachment to the service of the church of England.

It was his practice to exhort his followers never to absent themselves from church: and, in speaking of the parochial clergy, he was generally reserved. In the first particular, many of his disciples have not failed to imitate his example, as long as it answered their purpose; for, no sooner

have

have they gained a good number of proselytes to their persuasion, than they have thrown off the mask of hypocrisy, and seceded from the church in formidable bodies, exhibiting triumph over the regular priesthood.

The Methodists of the present day have acted nearly in the same manner, in almost every town in Cornwall; sometimes rapidly revolting, and sometimes gradually withdrawing themselves from those parochial congregations which they first, with all the cunning of their master, professed to reverence.\*

In

\* I lately met with an instance of two Methodists, who, coming to church as sponsors for a child to be baptized, remained there until the clergyman ascended the pulpit, when they

In apology for their secession, they naturally inveigh against the clergy and their doctrines: and the preacher ~~and~~ from ~~and~~ they contemptuously turned their backs upon him, and left the congregation. I prefer, indeed, this open avowal of dislike to the simulation that pretends an attachment to the church. For it is impossible to be pleased, at once, with the regular service, and methodistical extemporaneousness—with the sober rational preaching of God's word, by a clergyman who is cool and dispassionate, and the ravings of an ignorant mechanic, who ascribes the heat of a distempered brain to the influence of the Holy Ghost:—It is impossible to serve God and Mammon. I have often wondered at the conduct of many sensible and well-disposed persons, who, though exemplary in their attendance on the church, and far from professing themselves Methodists, yet pay occasional visits to the meeting-house. On Sunday mornings and afternoons they mix with the regular congregations, and on Sunday evening with Methodists. Hence their faith becomes unsettled, and

from the tub, or the upping-stock,  
hath often, of late, aspersed, with ran-  
corous venom, the good Rector or  
Vicar,

and their minds distracted with various doubts  
and fears. And, like the followers of Baal,  
“they halt between two opinions,” till, at  
length, they decide against the church. But,  
admitting that they still frequent the church,  
and consider the meeting-house in a secondary  
light, I cannot but remind them of the duty  
they owe their country, by setting an example  
of uniform attention to its religious establish-  
ment. Their inconsistency may operate, in a  
manner they would not wish, on the ignorant  
and uneducated. There are some, however,  
who tell us, that a certain mode of spending  
the Sunday evening, in a religious manner, is  
wanting in our establishment; and that, if an  
evening lecture were instituted in our churches,  
they would attend the Lecturer, in preference  
to the Methodist preacher. In answer to which,  
I would observe, that the public profession of  
our faith, at the periods already fixed, is suffi-  
cient for every religious purpose, as we consider  
ourselves

Vicar, whose benevolence has precluded the just punishment of vagrant imposture. If, amidst his unintelligible

ourselves members of one great body; and, that any additional attendance on the church would give a puritanical aspect to the Sabbath, and (as I once heard Bishop Ross observe, in objecting to Sunday schools,) "throw a Pharisaical gloom over the most cheerful religion in the world." Besides, the wise and considerate disapprove of *evening* religious meetings. The conventicle is, too often, the scene of incontinent assignation, both with the devotees themselves, and with those who, of no religion at all, go thither for the express purpose of pursuing their licentious amours.—It is, sometimes, remarked, that the less religious, who frequent not the meeting, are generally distributed through the public-houses of a parish.

But, it is the duty of the parish-priest, and of the magistrate, to prevent intemperance at public-houses: and he who watches not over those haunts of *ebsiety*, at all times, and on a Sunday

gible rant, the confident disclaimer produce any specific accusation, he tells the people that their pastors are

Sunday evening in particular, can neither answer for his negligence to his own conscience, his country, nor his God.

To return, however, to the meeting. We will admit, for argument's sake, that a person of a religious mind may pass an hour, or two, there, unexceptionably, with respect to himself. But, perhaps, he has children and servants. I have, myself, more than once, witnessed the bad practices of servants, during the absence of their masters and mistresses, at the meeting-house.

I have seen little children wandering about the streets and lanes, in idleness, whilst their parents were, (as they fancied) serving God. Surely, it ought never to be forgotten, that the relative duties are, of all, the most indispensable; and, that the love of God is a mere chimera, unless it manifest itself in the love of man.

ODDS

not

not enlightened—that they preach not gospel sermons; and that, on Sundays, they are careless of their flock, and, on other days, immersed in pleasure. The first charge, as proceeding from the mouth of a cobbler, who had pondered over his fanatical nonsense, whilst he was driving the awl, is ridiculous and contemptible. And, as to the second, it is so far from being true, that, comparatively speaking, the clergy of the west of England deserve to be proposed as patterns of religiousness, sobriety, and decency. Such was the opinion of our late excellent Bishop, (Dr. Butler,) who, at his primary (and his only) visitation, felicitated himself on being appointed to a diocese, where the clergy (he said) as compared with those of the metropolis, and its neighbourhood, were exemplarily strict in the performance

ance

ance of their religious duties," a point on which he evidently insisted, with heartfelt pleasure and satisfaction. So regular and orderly are the western Clergy, as a body, that even the slightest excesses of an individual are noticed with every mark of disapprobation.

Invectives against the Clergy generally arise from a gloomy, discontented spirit—a spirit, that is equally inimical to our political and religious constitution—that, at one time, discovers itself in scoffing at the clerical order; at another, betrays its sullenness in deprecating the splendour of the court. Prudent and reserved, it affects the love of economy, good order, and religion; yet, cherishing treason in secret, I have seen it kindle into rapture at the word revolution—

I have detected it, in a squint of malignity, amidst the triumph of Britons !

That the Methodists are industrious in exposing to observation the defects of the Clergy, more from the levelling disposition of the times than from a sense of duty, it would be easy to ascertain.

You, Sir, who have been admitted into the very *penetralia* of methodism, must often, I think, have lamented "that pride, and haughtiness of heart," which hath professed its hatred of establishments, and which, owning no master but the Holy Spirit, hath longed to see the glorious period when episcopacies shall be dissolved—when all cathedrals shall be levelled with the dust ! You are acquainted, perhaps,

perhaps, with some even of your own order, who behold the day approaching when they shall have no more to contend "with spiritual wickedness in high places;" but, free from the control of all human authority, may declaim, to crowded audiences, from foreign pulpits; or, if denied that honour, may betake themselves to the fields, without endangering the loss of their canonicals.

But it is not establishment alone which the Methodists would overthrow: they would overthrow, if possible, each other. Each leader betrays a jealousy of his brother's popularity and influence. No sooner had the first preachers of Methodism become distinguished among men, than each, observing the multitudes attracted to the other, began to envy

the success, and rail at the preaching, of his fellow-labourer; and, breaking off all connection with his “own familiar friend,” discovered to the world, too plainly, the secret springs by which he was actuated.\*

\* With respect to churchmen, Mr. Whitfield says, “that all morality set up against his shall sink, with its professors, into hell.” And Mr. Wesley dispatches, often, all mankind to hell, who are not Methodists. *Enthus.* Part II. Pp. 117, 118.

With respect to themselves, we find Wesley declaiming against Whitfield, for “the horrible, blasphemies of his horrible doctrines;” and describing the Moravians as “the worst of men, both in principle and practice.”

In the mean time, the Moravians tell us, that both Wesley and Whitfield are “false prophets, having eyes full of adultery, and leading unstable souls in the way of damnation.—Children of the devil, servants of corruption, for whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.” Part II. p. 137.

Among

Among their successors I have observed the same dissensions ; the same animosities. I have heard, Sir, the Arminian Methodists execrating the very name of Hawker ; whilst the Calvinistic " have given back " every curse " sevenfold into their bosoms."

Such is the demeanor of those who, in their own conceit, are the sole disciples of our blessed Saviour ; yet, who seem to have forgotten, that, " when HE was reviled, he reviled not again ; that, when he suffered, he threatened not ;" and who laugh him, as it were, to scorn, whilst he tells them : " By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Notwithstanding these hostilities among themselves, they affect a more

than ordinary degree of charity towards their unfortunate brethren. Leading honest labourers and artificers astray by the seductive power of their eloquence, they work the ruin of numerous families ; and then put the rich under contribution, in order to relieve the necessities of the poor. They institute asylums and hospitals ; and move heaven and earth in support of their charitable foundations ; over which they “reign as kings.\*” In favour of an alms-house, they solicit the great, and circumvent the lowly ; impose on credulous men, and “lead captive silly women ;”—“damn” the sinner, and deify the saint ; administer medicines to the sick, and dictate the wills of the dying.†

This

\* 1 Cor. iv. 8.      † They boast of favours, entertainments, liberalities, and presents from

This familiar intercourse of the teachers with their people, must often be improved into a union of the sexes —as refined as that of Father Confessors with their relenting daughters. Virgins, indeed, innocent and unsuspecting, have received repeated lessons from their spiritual instructors; till, at length, sensible of the burthen of their sins, they have dropped the tears of contrition! \*

Whilst

from gentlemen, and especially *elect ladies*, and *honourable women*. “A Bank-bill (says the saintly journalist) of ten pounds, as a present to myself —This I took as a hint from Providence to go on,” (very rightly judged,) “and various presents as tokens of their love.” — “Thus shall it be done to the man whom God delighteth to honour.” *Enthus. Part II. p. 16.*

\* “ These Methodists (says the Bishop) are sometimes acquainted with the *weak side* of hu-

man

Whilst the pastors are thus occupied, the lambs run mad; the rest are wolves in sheep's clothing—in other words, the more ignorant part of "the Lord's people" are actually deprived of their senses, and the wiser

man nature, in more senses than one: and, we should all attend to Christ's prediction and warning concerning the false prophets, who (if possible) "would deceive the very elect."—  
"Wherefore, if they say unto you, behold he is in the desart, go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not."

The Methodist preacher at Salisbury, who debauched, at least, one of his congregation, and ran away with her, and deserted his own wife, sufficiently proves the connection between enthusiasm and impurity. He, indeed, was "above the speaking submission of remorse and repentance for his adulteries. Being detected, he preached publicly in defence of plurality of women, under the name of wives."

*Enthus.* Part II. p. 160.

turn

turn rogues and debauchees.\* At this moment, the "simple folk" are some in laughing, some in fainting, fits—some hoarse with hymns—some lifting up their voices like trumpets ; others, prostrate in the dust, and bewailing their sins, through almost all the towns and villages in Cornwall. How the

\* I never met with a single Methodist who was superior to the rest of the world, in morality ; but I have met with many who were vastly inferior. I have met with several cheats among the Methodists ; one of whom plainly intimated, on the detection of a fraud, that " his being regular at church and sacrament," would make up for a little lack of common honesty ! I have met with several fornicators among the Lord's people—a master, for instance, debauching his female servant, and threshing his wife for complaining of his incontinence. Both the master and his servant were Methodists. The female servant, far gone with child, was ready to make oath, that she was " as pure as the Blessed Virgin."

quiet

quiet sort of saints are employed at this instant, I am rather at a loss to say: they are more secret in their manœuvres.

Thus, while religion is, with some, the gloomiest thing upon earth, and, with others, the cloak of hypocrisy; whilst, with some, it imposes the command to believe this, and to do that, under pain of eternal perdition; and, with others, whose audacity is commensurate with their depravity, it is introduced to sanction the most abominable practices; are we to wonder, that infidelity should make such rapid strides among us, as the present age may well deem its deepest ignominy? The imposition of the Pharisæical Methodist, is a yoke and a burden too heavy to be borne—it seems discreditable to Christianity. Amidst  
the

the doubts of his distracted followers, the "chambering and wantonness" of the sanctified denouncer of damnation are brought forward into open day; and they are sufficient to settle, in unbelief, the heart that before wavered in suspense.

The feelings of the moralist revolt at the prospect; and, to the politician also, such a view of the Methodists is truly alarming. To him are exhibited a vast body of people—many enthusiasts, and many infidels, but all equally alienated from the church government—all looking for some great emergencies to liberate them from its restraints; and, consequently, all ripe for rebellion.

"These things, Sir, being so," I would wish you, laying all prejudice aside,

aside, to consider them with due attention.

And, I would wish *you*, Sir, more especially to consider them, as you have acquired a portentous influence over the Calvinists of the West of England.

However the spirit of levelling may have run through the congregations of the Methodists, I am sure, Sir, that you, who have had all the advantages of education, and have acquired, by your publications, the distinction of Doctor of Divinity, must be a firm friend to our establishment; and that, though your enthusiasm and fanaticism may lead you into errors, you are by no means aware of the consequences of your eccentricities, both to the church and the state.

I have

I have been informed, Sir, that, in your late Quixotic expedition into the West, you boasted of your numerous congregations; and that, like your teacher Whitfield, you exulted in the hosannahs of the multitude. You, however, know too much, not to know that the most ignorant and unprincipled preacher in the world, if he deviates from the common track, will strike the vulgar with admiration, from the very circumstance of his irregularity. Where the sober clergyman can draw one hearer to his doctrines, the ranting mechanic can command a thousand. It is not learning, but singularity; not truth, but mysticism; not reason, but passion, that affects the uncultivated mind. The silent merit of the parish priest is unalluring to common eyes. A well-regulated piety neither attracts the

multitude, nor secures their approba-  
tion.

In noticing, Sir, your western mis-  
sion, I have neither said, nor insinuated,  
that you have preached, or wished to  
preach, at the meeting-house, in the  
barn, or in the field. Your gown,  
and your degree of Doctor of Divi-  
nity, will, at least, save you from such  
a transgression. But, under the im-  
posing mask of your divinity, you  
took possession of the pulpits of some  
who were unacquainted with your  
doctrines.

For the itinerants who have gone  
into foreign parts to preach the word,  
we may plead, in excuse, that they  
penetrated the most inhospitable  
countries, where the sound of the  
gospel had been never heard. But

what

what plea can ingenuity devise in extenuation of your conduct? Amidst an established religion, and a regular ministry, it is an insult to the parochial clergy, and an affront to their diocesan. If we ask you, "by what authority you preach?"—You will answer, perhaps, "by the authority of Jesus Christ, committed to me by the Bishop of my diocese: 'Take thou authority to preach the gospel.'" But if we remind you of the limitation of that authority, in the following words—"In the congregation whereunto thou shalt be lawfully appointed,"—away will fly, at once, I suppose, the Bishop's commission; and we shall hear you exclaiming in all the rant of enthusiasm: "I look upon all the world as my parish! This is the work to which *I know*

God has called me!"—So said Wesley.

Still let me repeat, that you will do well, perhaps, to consider this humble remonstrance. That it proceeds not from any personal prejudice, you may possibly be convinced, when I declare to you, that I hold your sermons in great esteem, (especially those on the Divinity of our Saviour,) and that, I think, I am as firm a Trinitarian as yourself.

Yet, be our persuasions what they may, I am well assured, that, if within our several parishes, or, according to our different stations, we do our duty to the best of our knowledge and abilities, we shall be finally accepted at the throne of mercy.

Though

Though treading different paths,  
yet we have but one object before us:  
and, if sincere, we shall all meet, I  
believe, in the road to salvation.

The good Archbishop Usher was  
of opinion, that, of "setting aside the  
points in which the several professors  
of Christianity disagree, and collect-  
ing into one body the articles to which  
they all assent, we should find so much  
truth, as, being joined with holy obe-  
dience, would be sufficient to save a  
Christian." Of a Non-conformist  
minister, Archbishop Tillotson said:  
"He allowed others to differ from  
him in points that were very dear to  
him; and, provided men did but fear  
God, and work righteousness, he loved  
them heartily, how distant soever from  
him in judgement, about things less  
necessary:

necessary: in all which he is very worthy to be a pattern to men of all persuasions."

Let us no more, then, interfere with one another in the spirit of contention; but let each individual pursue his course, according to his belief and his conscience. Considering that we are heirs of the same promises, and candidates for the same immortality, let us look on our fellow Christians with eyes of candour, of compassion, and of brotherly love; ready to make allowances for the infirmities common to man, and to assist our weaker brethren by every act of kindness. And, let us all be aware, whatever our tenets may be, that nothing can afford us comfort, at the hour of death, but the consciousness

sciousness of having “done justice,  
loved mercy, and walked humbly with  
our God.”

I remain,

REVEREND SIR,

Your faithful servant,

R. POLWHELE.

THE END.

( 18 )

the importance of the  
colonies, and the  
right of the mother country  
to tax them.

Mr. G. B. C.

Mr. G. B. C.